
T H E

C R I S I S.

N U M B E R, LXXVI, *To be continued every Saturday,*
DURING THE PRESENT BLOODY CIVIL WAR IN AMERICA.

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For the C R I S I S.



POPULAR affection, when justly obtained, (that is by truly promoting the interest of the people) is the highest honour which a mortal can enjoy, and one of the surest marks of public felicity; for when a man possesses the general love of any community, it is natural to infer that the community esteem him their general benefactor; and certainly no respect, honours, or reward, which the people can bestow, are too great to testify their gratitude to him, who approves himself worthy of that character.

Popularity therefore, in this sense, on this foundation, and under these restrictions, is due to every true patriot (a character indeed somewhat scarce!) and is a good presumptive proof of the happiness of that

that nation, under which it is obtained. But this desirable blessing is so often acquired by false means, bestowed on worthless objects, and applied to bad ends, that an honest man cannot be too cautious on whom he confers it, nor how he is influenced by it, when conferred on others.

The vulgar multitude judge honestly of public affairs, as far as they come within their knowledge; and, having no hopes of sharing in the administration themselves, desire only to live quietly and easily, in the free enjoyment of what they daily earn, incumbered with as few taxes and drawbacks, as the real necessities of the public will admit of. For this reason they always respect, and, in a manner, venerate those, who seem to consult their interest, and endeavour to preserve them in the secure possession of their rights and privileges. But they are so liable to be imposed on by false shews, and artful pretences, that we are not always to look upon their favour as the badge of real patriotism, and a truly public spirit; for on the contrary, we shall find that it is too often acquired by sinister methods, in order to carry on some crafty and pernicious design.

The wisest and best constituted governments of old, especially the famous republicks of Greece and Rome, were sensible of this, that it was made criminal for any of their members to affect uncommon popularity, and conciliate too much the minds of their fellow subjects: accordingly we find, in the histories, several instances of the most eminent patriots, who were banished, and otherwise treated as enemies to their country, only for rendering themselves too much beloved by general largesses and donations, or other extraordinary acts of public beneficence; for which severities, those nations have been often reproached, by succeeding ages, with injustice, barbarity, and ingratitude; but if we examine their conduct, in this particular, with candour and impartiality, I believe we shall find, that they acted a very prudent and commendable part; they seemed to judge very rightly of human nature; they knew the temptations of power, how and popularity is apt to turn the wisest heads, and corrupt the purest hearts; for which reason they thought it impolitic to let the most deserving of their fellow subjects possess a power, which he might

turn

turn against them, or trust their liberties to the private virtue and integrity of any man whatsoever.

Indeed the histories of all nations, as well of theirs, abound with so many instances, in which the favor of the People has been most traiterously abused and perverted to wicked purposes, that to a serious and thoughtful mind, their conduct stands in need of no justification: for whenever we read of any great, professed patriot, who falls under signal disgrace or punishment, on account of his popular interest and esteem, though acquired by the justest methods, we ought not to interpret it as proceeding from any ill will to virtue or public good, but as the effect of political precaution, and of the jealousy of a wise people for their antient rights and liberties.

But there is another sort of popularity, which is infinitely more dangerous than what I have been speaking of, and has been more studied, in these latter ages, by ambitious and designing men; I mean popularity among the chief persons of a nation; which becomes still more dangerous and vile, when it is cultivated by venal and corrupt methods. This is indeed the most comprehensive method of becoming popular, as it saves abundance of trouble in cajoling the affections of the vulgar, and stooping to a thousand, little pleasing arts, to which some modern great spirits do not care to submit.

A man, who sets up for a diffusive and universal love of the people, must put himself under several uneasy restraints in his behaviour, and guide every action of his life with the utmost caution, tenderness, and circumspection. He must be courteous, affable and generous; must submit to the wayward tempers of a fickle multitude, and adapt himself to every character; he must be all things to all men, and honour them in all their various appetites, different views, and fantastical opinions, he must humble himself to the pride of the lofty, consult the interest of the avaritious, and conform to the intemperance of the libertine; he must drink or pray, whore or cant, be a faint or a finner, just as his company shall please to prescribe, or set him an example.

Whereas a man, who is master of the other compendious method, and has it in his power to put it in practice, will find no occasion to study

study the inclinations of the people, nor even so much as pretend to a zeal for their interest; he knows a much shorter way to compass his designs, by bringing over a whole Borough, a City or a County at once into his interest, and obtaining by these means, the general assent of the nation to his own ambitious designs; he becomes in this sense, very popular, at the same time that he is universally odious, and retains the vox populi on his side, in spite of their teeth.

Nor is it at all difficult to accomplish such a design, in a vicious and depraved age, when profuseness extravagance, and a general spirit of libertinism, grew predominant in any nation, especially among persons of a superior rank, who are intrusted with the rights and liberties of the people; for when once luxury has fixed a deep root in their minds, it will soon get the better of their noble faculties; it will effeminate, soften and melt down all those stubborn virtues, which are the natural effects of temperance and frugality; the consequence of which is, that a man thus debauched and effeminated will in order to support himself, in the same vicious manner, fall into any measures, which are dictated to him with a prospect of advantage, and sacrifice the most valuable rights of his country for a fashionable town-house, a splendid equipage, and an elegant table.

But as it is very easy for any man in power to acquire this sort of popular affection; so it is hardly possible to withstand its influence, or disappoint its designs.

There are some hopes that a man, who arrives at popularity, by courteousness, affability and munificent Spirit may really be in earnest, and exert these amiable virtues from a good natural disposition, and without any private view; for if it is possible at least, even in this age, that a disinterested zeal for the public good, may be the prevailing passion in some breasts; and that there may still exist a few, particular men, in whom the innate love of their Country remains uncorrupted with any sordid and mercenary considerations.

There may be others, who, though they have not the same noble and sincere affection for the public, yet are fond of popularity, for the
fake

fake of popularity, and find their ambition sufficiently gratified by the shouts and acclamations of a numerous multitude. Nay, even supposing that a man endeavours to insinuate himself into the popular favour, with a bad design; yet if he does not attempt it by corrupting the leaders and guardians of the people, the danger to the public is not very great; for it is impossible for the craftiest brain to impose very long on the majority of a nation; He may for some time reign in esteem, and trepan the affections of his countrymen by plausible pretences, artful declarations and a seeming concern for their service, but when his latent designs appear, (as at length they must) the people will withdraw their affection; his general popularity will be turned into a general odium, and he will feel the resentments and indignation of those, whose favour he has abused. Perhaps two more remarkable instances cannot be produced than of those treacherous apostate traitors OLIVER and TOWNSEND.

But the case is quite otherwise with those who make themselves popular by venal and corrupt methods. Money the root of all evil, is also the strongest cement in the world; it binds together persons of the most opposite complexions, and is a more lasting tie than honour, friendship, relation, consanguinity, or unity of affections.

When any person therefore takes an annual or other salary for giving his opinion, that black is white, it is in vain for us to endeavour to convince him of the contrary; persuasion to such a man is of no effect, and reasoning is thrown away upon him; the strongest arguments leave no impression on his mind, and the clearest truth has no charms in his eyes. He is enlisted in the service of his patron, and must always fight on that side, let the cause be what it will, from which he receives his pay. It is ridiculous to talk of Right to a man, who is pre-engaged, and hired to judge wrong; or to argue about justice, conscience and equity with one, who has tasted the sweets of acting upon different principles; witness the callous souls of the present piratical ministry, they have been deaf to reason and the most sacred truths, their hearts have been steeled against every feeling of humanity, through interested views in all their proceedings against America.

Ambitious

Ambitious and ill-designing men, in former ages, were not ignorant of this. They knew how precarious, as well as troublesome, that sort of popularity is, which subsists only upon the foundation of worthy actions; and how permanent that, which is established upon self-interest, bribery, and subornation.

TACITUS informs us, that AUGUSTUS paved his way to dominion by these methods; having laid aside the title of Triumvir, and taking upon himself only the character of Consul, under a specious pretence that he had nothing at heart but the good of the people (whose favour he at first cultivated by several generous actions), he grew insolent by degrees, and at length engrossed the whole power of the empire into his own hands.

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